



Daily morning exercise periods prevent assembly line workers from becoming fatigued and stiff from sitting for long periods—Novosti Press Agency photo

## Health Services in a Soviet Auto Plant

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MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING and good relations between a shop's physician and its management are considered very important at the Gorky Automobile Works in the Volga region of Central Russia. The chief of the plant's medical services, Dr. I. Grinvald, stated in an interview, "We are doing everything in our power to systematically draw the attention of the factory management and the public to various health aspects among workers."

Every month, the Gorky enterprise gathers information on the number of illnesses among its 20,000 employees and the sanitary conditions of its shops, and the data are processed in the plant's computer center. The results are sub-

mitted to the plant's management, to the trade union committee, to the accident prevention department, and to the management of the shops and services. The rate of absenteeism due to illness is an important factor in quarterly and annual production reports. Therefore shop managers zealously approach the dynamics of illness and accidents among workers, juxtaposing them with graphs of production fulfillment.

### Medical Services

The factory physicians operate a modern medical facility. The plant's medical services include a polyclinic that can accommodate 3,200 patients a day, a 250-bed hospital, a radioisotope diagnostic laboratory, a physiotherapy outpatient clinic equipped to handle 3,000 patients daily, a dental polyclinic, and a women's advisory center. A round-the-clock first aid station and a trauma section are also staffed by the plant's physicians. All of these medical services are provided free of charge to the workers.

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In line with the structure of its production lines, the plant has five treatment sections. Each section includes a related group of occupational sectors, and each is directly concerned with specific production processes. This means that physicians treat conditions that are related to specific production procedures. The shop's medical brigades, including therapists and other specialists, are formed on similar principles.

The aim of the plant's medics (physician assistants) and physicians is not only to cure patients but also to prevent diseases. "In order to identify and prevent occupational diseases in good time," Grinvald noted, "we administer various vaccinations and mass medical examinations—chest X-rays, gynecological examinations, dental examinations, and so on."

To prevent occupational diseases the shop's health facilities have initiated preventive measures. Workers who are exposed to occupational hazards receive physiotherapeutic treatment, such as massages, thermal baths, inhalation, and ultraviolet irradiation during their lunch breaks. These treatments also have proved useful in shops where there are frequent cases of hypertension. The effectiveness of these measures has surpassed all expectations—the incidence of illness in these shops has decreased almost threefold over the past few years.

"A new employment practice has been intro-

duced at the plant," according to the chief physician. "A worker who must change occupations for health reasons is invited to participate with the medical-control commission in choosing another position."

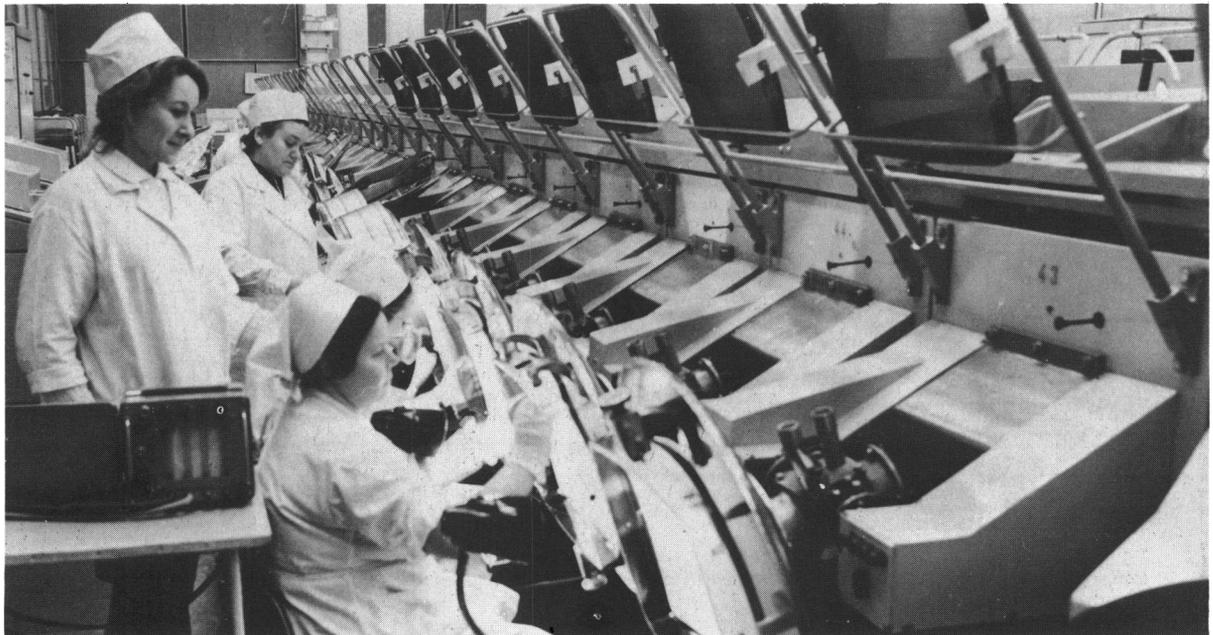
The rehabilitation of invalids is organized with management's support. A section in the hospital is reserved for the rehabilitation of patients with complications from accidents. In one shop an industrial rehabilitation section is being built which combines training and productive labor for patients.

The plant devotes a great deal of attention to medical examinations of the workers. Over the past 10 years the number of workers undergoing medical examinations has almost doubled. The plant annually allots 20,000 rubles (\$23,300) for treatments to guard against reoccurrences of previous illnesses or conditions. Dermatologists and venereologists, in cooperation with the staff of the central laboratory of industrial hygiene, have achieved tangible results in the prevention of skin diseases.

### Labor Conditions

Several provisions of the annual collective agreement between management and the workers are devoted to the improvement of labor conditions, questions of social insurance, and housing. The women's council of the plant's trade union com-

*Factory health care personnel analyze random air samples taken in the work areas in special light projectors—Novosti Press Agency photo*



mittee compiled a list of jobs that are not recommended for women as a supplement to the agreement.

The observance of normal labor conditions is controlled by the plant's central laboratory of industrial hygiene. The laboratory has prepared a sanitary-hygiene manual for all shops which specifies measures necessary to maintain acceptable labor conditions. For instance, at the laboratory's demand, the use of ethylated gasoline was banned in automotive shops. In other sections of the plant, ventilation and lighting systems have been reconstructed. The tension of electromagnetic

fields has been reduced, and much has been done to decrease noise volume.

All new projects for shop reconstruction, equipment modernization, and other improvements are considered by the sanitary inspection commission, part of the plant's medical services. Last year 267 such projects were reviewed. Forty were rejected because they did not meet the sanitary requirements. For example, when a metal plating shop was being modernized to increase its capacity, the sewage installation was not changed. The commission halted renovation until designers increased the installation's sewage capacity by 1½ times.



*Patient in the surgical department of the health center receives pressure chamber treatment—Novosti Press Agency photo*